

**Stroud College of Further Education
Reinspection of General Resources: November 2000
Report from the Inspectorate
The Further Education Funding Council**

THE FURTHER EDUCATION FUNDING COUNCIL

The Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) has a legal duty to make sure further education in England is properly assessed. The FEFC's inspectorate inspects and reports on each college of further education according to a four-year cycle. It also assesses and reports nationally on the curriculum, disseminates good practice and advises the FEFC's quality assessment committee.

REINSPECTION

The FEFC has agreed that colleges with provision judged by the inspectorate to be less than satisfactory or poor (grade 4 or 5) should be reinspected. In these circumstances, a college may have its funding agreement with the FEFC qualified to prevent it increasing the number of new students in an unsatisfactory curriculum area until the FEFC is satisfied that weaknesses have been addressed.

Satisfactory provision may also be reinspected if actions have been taken to improve quality and the college's existing inspection grade is the only factor which prevents it from meeting the criteria for FEFC accreditation.

Reinspections are carried out in accordance with the framework and guidelines described in Council Circulars 97/12, 97/13 and 97/22. Reinspections seek to validate the data and judgements provided by colleges in self-assessment reports and confirm that actions taken as a result of previous inspection have improved the quality of provision. They involve full-time inspectors and registered part-time inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work they inspect. The opinion of the FEFC's audit service contributes to inspectorate judgements about governance and management.

GRADE DESCRIPTORS

Assessments use grades on a five-point scale to summarise the balance between strengths and weaknesses. The descriptors for the grades are:

- *grade 1 - outstanding provision which has many strengths and few weaknesses*
- *grade 2 - good provision in which the strengths clearly outweigh the weaknesses*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory provision with strengths but also some weaknesses*
- *grade 4 - less than satisfactory provision in which weaknesses clearly outweigh the strengths*
- *grade 5 - poor provision which has few strengths and many weaknesses.*

Audit conclusions are expressed as good, adequate or weak.

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Stroud College of Further Education South West Region

Reinspection of general resources: November 2000

Background

Stroud College of Further Education was inspected in November 1999 and the findings were published in inspection report 30/00. The area of general resources was awarded a grade 4.

Key strengths during the inspection of general resources were: good condition of the main college buildings in Stroud; well-used computer-based learning centres; access for wheelchair users to most areas; welcoming reception and customer services areas. Weaknesses were: poor facilities at Dursley and Nailsworth; the inadequate library; small, poorly located study skills centre; excessive litter on parts of the main site; insufficient 'drop-in' computing facilities.

Reinspection took place over three days in November 2000. Inspectors examined all college sites in Stroud, Dursley and Nailsworth, had meetings with managers and staff and met with students. A range of documented evidence was also examined.

Assessment

The college has acted promptly and positively to address key weaknesses identified during the last inspection. The facilities at Nailsworth and Dursley have been improved. At the Nailsworth centre there is now a security presence and vandalism has been reduced. The reception area is staffed at key times. There is a restricted catering service of sandwiches and hot drinks available to the predominantly part-time students. The Dursley centre has been improved since the last inspection. Three temporary classrooms have been taken out of use and refurbishment inside the main building has enhanced the provision. There is evidence of caretaking and good housekeeping. An external catering firm provides a good service and access for students in wheelchairs has been improved. The library on the main site in Stroud has been reorganised and is used by more students. There are 30 study carrels in an identified quiet area and 14 modern computers are linked to the Internet. The new 'drop-in' computer provision on the ground floor now enables the library machines to be used primarily for information retrieval and research. The library resources for the school of art have been incorporated into the main library provision. There is still a shortage of books in some curriculum areas and the college acknowledged this in the self-assessment report. The college is now adequately managing its computing facilities. The introduction of 'drop-in' information and learning technology facilities for students has addressed the shortage of computers and software for students requiring IT resources outside timetabled provision. The study skills centre has been relocated. It is adjacent to a newly appointed key skills and 'drop-in' centre, all of which is well located on the ground floor. There is effective information and learning technology provision at the Yate and Dursley centres. Temporary classrooms on the main site comprised 25% of the total accommodation at the time of the last inspection. The poorest provision has been removed and the ratio of temporary classrooms is now 18%. There is a planned maintenance programme to keep the temporary buildings in good repair. The college grounds are now both well maintained and unencumbered by accumulated debris or litter.

Revised grade: general resources 3.